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Cal Poly Students in Kazakhstan Preparing for CubeSat Launch

SAN LUIS OBISPO—Cal Poly aerospace graduate students Armen Toorian and Lori Brooks, along with Cal Poly Sponsored Programs Director Jill Keezer, are “on the ground” in Baikonur, Kazakhstan, reporting on and preparing for what will be the largest space deployment of picosatellites ever.

The CubeSat Project is an international collaboration of over 80 universities, high schools and private firms developing picosatellites. The small (pico) satellites contain scientific, private and government payloads. On July 26, 14 CubeSats designed and built by students at various universities in the U.S. and elsewhere are scheduled to launch into space aboard a Dnepr-1LV rocket from the Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan.

Built to specifications developed by Cal Poly and Stanford University's Space Systems Development Laboratory, all the picosatellites will be launched from P-Pod deployers designed and built at Cal Poly.

Before the launch, Toorian and Brooks are working on attaching the deployers and CubeSats to the rocket, checking the electrical connections and making other launch preparations. They are posting regular updates on their experiences in Kazakhstan on the CubeSat Web site. Go to www.cubesat.org, and click on the DNEPR Launch1 graphic at right or, in the blue navigation bar at left, click on “Missions,” then “DNEPR Launch1.”

A live feed of the launch and teleconference with Toorian and Brooks will take place at the Advanced Technologies Laboratory (ATL) on the Cal Poly campus on July 26 at noon. In addition, real-time satellite tracking will be available soon after the launch from the CubeSat Earthstation Network at the ATL.

Cal Poly, Cornell University and the University of Arizona will each send two CubeSats into space with the launch. Other schools participating in the mass launch are the University of Illinois, the University of Kansas, Montana State University and the University of Hawaii.

In addition, schools in Norway, South Korea and Japan have built CubeSats for this month's launch, which will put the satellites into a 500-by-566 km (310 by 351 miles) orbit with a 97-degree inclination. Each satellite is a 10 cm (4 inch) cube weighing just 1 kg (2.2 lbs) into which the battery, transmitter and various experiments are packed.

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